

REMARKS

This is in response to the Official Action of July 1, 2003. Entry of this Amendment, and reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 13-15 and 17-19 were rejected as being anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on the Gunn Patent 5,590,420. Claims 13 and 16 were rejected as being unpatentable over a combination of the Pollack Patent 3,732,578, in view of Gunn.

By way of background, claims 13-20 as originally presented, and as now amended, emphasize the ability to manage friction in desired locations depending upon the anticipated loading, or shear trauma by using individual patches that can be applied to support particular areas of soft tissue. The use of patches, which are capable of being placed into selected areas, quite apart from the object that is supporting or loading the tissue itself, is quite different from the teachings in Gunn. In other words, the present method permits the person affected by the high loading, shear, or other trauma that affects tissue, to select the regions where low friction support is desired. The users can omit low friction support in other regions so that there is no complete "slippery" surface that might be objectionable in normal day-to-day movements, such as walking.

In particular, claim 13 includes the feature that the friction management method is for a support^{max} has an exposed surface, which is loaded against a portion of the human body. This differentiates from the intent and use of the Gunn patent, and makes it quite different from any of the teachings of Gunn in that the Gunn patent teaches, even in connection with footwear inserts, that the material itself is impregnated with a low friction material, adding it to the fiber, yarn, fabric or other article. Note that the showing in Figure 4 of Gunn shows a fabric lining that incorporates the low friction material, and

does not deal with a patch or patches that are selectively placed at a time and by a person far removed from the manufacturing process.

Inserts are shown, in Figures 4, 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D of the Gunn drawings, but they are not taught as being used in a method wherein selected pressure regions are directly supported with a patch of material that is interfaced between the exposed surface and the selected regions of the skin.

An important difference with the present method is that the person that has the trauma, discomfort, sores or tenderness can utilize the low friction patches and put them into place in any particular region desired, for alleviating shear loading on the skin. Further, the individual patches of the present invention lend themselves to use in this method because they can be conformed in place, and there is no need to purchase a pre-formed toe cup, heel cup, or other item that is not in any way adaptable to insertion between the skin and a support surface.

There is no need to buy a sock that has low friction areas woven into it, that may or may not be suitable for use by the individual, nor a glove, which again in Gunn, has fixed locations of low friction material impregnated into the glove material with no ability of the user to select a location in which these low friction areas are placed. With the present invention, the user can put patch where it is wanted. This can be in a shoe, a prosthesis or on a glove to support loaded areas. The user can select putting a patch on a garment such as a glove or sock, or on a shovel handle, if desired.

This claim 13 is believed to define a non-obvious method. Allowance of claim 13 is requested.

Claims 14, 15 and 16 are believed to be allowable with claim 13.

New claim 22 also depends from claim 13, and as the patches removably affixed to portions of the exposed surface, so

that the portion of the human body are supported on the exposed surface in regions other than the selected regions, without the introduction of the low friction material. This provides for a true friction management system, wherein regions of high friction can be left, if desired or needed, and in other areas where low friction is beneficial, the patches can be put into place.

Claim 17 has been amended to more particularly define the method, and indicates in particular that reduction of trauma is provided by applying patches only in the selected regions, so that only the selected regions are supported on low friction surface patches.

Again, in the Gunn patent, there is no ability to select areas wherein shear loads are likely to cause, or have caused damage, although in Figure 4 there is an indication that patches could be placed in bony areas. However, there is no indication that the user selects these areas, and has patches than can be provided for relief of shear loads, or shear abrasions to tissue in such areas. Claim 17 solves this problem, and provides an inventive method for increasing the comfort of an individual. The individual, again, selects the place where these low friction patches are placed.

Claims 18 and 19 are believed allowable with claim 17, and claim 20 includes a patch that has low friction material exposed in oppositely facing support surfaces of the patch.

Favorable action of these claims is respectfully requested.

New claim 21 depends from claim 17, and includes the step of adding or relocating at least one low friction surface patch after the tissue has been supported on the object for a period of time, which would permit the user to determine whether the patch is accomplishing the purpose, or should be relocated, enlarged or if additional patches are needed. The steps of adding or relocating is claimed specifically, and there is no

suggestion of the evaluation of the tissue and then adjusting the support to increase comfort in any of the references cited.

Claim 22 is made to depend from claim 13, and as stated includes the removably affixing of the patches.

Independent claim 23 and dependent claim 24 more particularly recite the method of reducing trauma, in that claim 23 includes providing a plurality of low friction support patches, which are releasably securable in place relative to a support surface, and then placing at least one of the patches between at least one selected region of high load and a support object, such that only the selected region or regions are supported on a low friction surface patch. The providing of a plurality of patches and then selecting the one or more patches to be placed in use provides for a new concept in friction management selectable by a person that is in need of relief from sores, tenderness and the like specifically as set out.

Claim 24 indicates that the patch has a film of polytetrafluoroethylene that has a bonded stretch fabric on one side, such that the film moves with the stretch fabric. The method includes conforming the patches to the support surface. This permits conforming the patch to a curved surface, so that it will be configured in a manner that is conducive to comfortable support.

In regard to the rejection on a combination of the Gunn and the Pollack patent, it is respectfully pointed out that Gunn fails to use this type of a patch, and Pollack addresses cushioning, but not slipperiness or low friction. The Pollack patent shows a prosthesis, which is the subject matter of claim 16, but there is no teaching in Pollack of providing the low friction patches where it is anticipated that they are needed or where the need arises because of soreness or tenderness. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the Pollack patent adds no substantial additional teaching to the art, tending to render the

claims obvious, and the claims are believed allowable over Pollack combined with Gunn for the reasons set forth.

Favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

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